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Congress Given Unified Anti-Drug Law Agency Plan

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President Nixon sent Congress today a reorganization plan setting up a unified command in the Justice Department for all U.S. anti-drug law enforcement.

The plan also would transfer to the Treasury Department all functions of the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service involving inspection of persons or their documents entering the country.

Left untouched by the order is the White House Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention. Nixon said it deals mostly with treatment and rehabilitation of drug victims and added:

"The proposed drug enforcement administration, working as a team with the Special Action Office, would arm Americans with a potent one-two-punch to help us fight back against the deadly enemy of drug abuse."

The changes will take effect on July 1 unless disapproved by either the Senate or House within 60 days.

Nixon has named Myles J. Ambrose, now head of the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement, to be administrator of the new combined agency during its formative period.

The President proposed consolidating under a new Drug Enforcement Administration in the Justice Department:

- All functions of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.
- Those functions of the Treasury's Bureau of Customs pertaining to drug investigations and intelligence.
- All functions of the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement.
- All functions of the Office of National Narcotics Intelligence.
- Research currently funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and other agencies involving drug law enforcement.

All of the agencies except the Bureau of Customs are already located at Justice. But Nixon said they now are "fragmented forces" with no over-all direction below the level of the attorney general.

Nixon said he intended to direct the Secretary of the Treasury, when the plan takes effect, to use the approximately 1,000 employees transferred from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to augment the Customs Bureau's staff.

Now when a traveler comes into the United States his passport and visa in case of a foreigner, is checked by an Immigration agent and his baggage by a customs agent. Under the President's proposal, both functions would be under the Customs Bureau.

Nixon said the grouping of most port-of-entry inspections in a single Cabinet department would reduce the need for much day-to-day interdepartmental coordination, allow more efficient staffing at some field locations, and remove the basis for "damaging interagency rivalries."

He added that "an important byproduct of the change would be more convenient service for travelers entering and leaving the country."

Because both types of inspection now performed by the INS and Customs have numerous objectives besides drug law enforcement, Nixon said "it is logical to vest them in the Treasury Department ... as long as the inspections are conducted with full awareness of related drug concerns."

Nixon said his proposal would "make possible a more effective anti-drug role for the FBI, especially in dealing with the relationship between drug trafficking and organized crime." I intend to see that the resources of the FBI are fully committed to assist in supporting the new Drug Enforcement Administration."